

# CHATS WITH JB

## SMOKEY STORY

### PT. 2

Hi Folks! JB online again. How are you? I hope you are enjoying our little chats.

As I recall, the Smokey Bear story was interrupted with other pressing stories. Would you like to hear more about him? If so, here we go.

### HOTFOOT TEDDY

Now, if I remember correctly, my last entry was that a New Mexico game warden and his family took the cub named Hotfoot Teddy. So, they nursed him back to health. And on June 27, 1950, this cub (famous by now) was flown to the National Zoo in Washington, DC to become the living embodiment of Smokey Bear!!! And, furthermore, the U.S. Postal Service eventually gave Smokey his own ZIP code because he was receiving 13,000 letters per week!!! Can you believe it?!!! By the way, I remember, as a child, loving Smokey (and Yogi Bear too). Just for the record, I had a Yogi Bear cup – sorry, Smokey! Anyway, on with the story...

### "SMOKEY THE BEAR"

Now, the same fellows that wrote the songs "Peter Cottontail" and "Frosty the Snowman" wrote the song, "Smokey the Bear." And, lo and behold, the song became a big hit! One of the writer's added "the" to Smokey's name to make the lyrics fit better. Consequently, a generation or two of children grew up calling "Smokey Bear," "Smokey the Bear." But now you know him just as "Smokey Bear"! Then on May 23 of that year Congress passed the Smokey Bear Act, so Smokey became the trademark for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This act enabled the Forest Service to use revenue from sales of Smokey toys and memorabilia for fire prevention awareness efforts. So, every time you buy a Smokey Bear toy it helps the Forest!

Do you know what finally happened to Smokey? Well, he grew old and arthritic and suffered from his injuries as a small cub. He retired from public service on May 2, 1975. A little cub which was rescued from starvation in a New Mexico Forest by park rangers joined Smokey at the National Zoo. They named him, "Little Smokey" and on the same day the original Smokey Bear retired, "Little Smokey" was officially named Smokey's successor and was renamed "Smokey II". Sadly, on November 9, 1976, the original Smokey Bear died at age 26. A nice old age for a nice old bear! His remains were flown back to New Mexico near where he was found. More than 250 people attended his memorial service!!!! And in 1979 Smokey Bear Historical Park was completed near Capitan, New Mexico at the grave of the original Smokey. Can you tell, I love Smokey Bear?!!

### CONTACT US

Well, in closing, if you would like Smokey to visit your organization within the Cherokee National Forest locale, you may contact the Ocoee Ranger District at (423) 338-3300 or the Watauga Ranger District at (423) 735-1500. If you have further questions, call the CNF Supervisor's Office at (423) 476-9700.

And if you visit with me again, I'll tell you more about Smokey!!!! Love my Smokeys!!!! And in memory of our original Smokey, remember: "Only YOU can prevent forest fires!"



Smokey Bear statue in International Falls, Minnesota park. Licensed photo by EWY Media/Adobe Stock.